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HOW TO REBUILD THE GIANTS

Keys for a huge offseason. 22

New housing bills to protect tenants. 4

Johnny Depp isn't looking too good. 17

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DO WE STILL NEED 'AMERICAN IDOL'?

The reality show kicks off one last season of star-searching. 18

FOX

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IPHONE PRODUCTION CUT

1 Apple is expected to cut production of its latest iPhone models about 30 percent in the January-March quarter, the Nikkei reported. As inventories of the iPhone 6s and 6s Plus have piled up since they were launched last September, production will be scaled back to let dealers go through their stock, the business daily reported. REUTERS

ISIS TERRITORY SHRINKS

2 Islamic State's territory shrank 40 percent from its maximum expansion in Iraq, and 20 percent in Syria in 2015, as international forces pushed it out of several cities, the U.S.-led coalition fighting it said Tuesday. There was no immediate comment from the hardline Islamist group on the estimates from the coalition, made up of countries including Britain, France and Jordan that have been bombing its positions. REUTERS

CHARACTER INCREASE

3 Twitter is building a feature that will allow users post messages as long as 10,000 characters, Re/code reported. Twitter, which currently has a 140-character limit, is considering launching the service toward the end of the first quarter but has not set an official date, Re/code reported. REUTERS

NYC BOAT SHOW

7 The New York Boat Show will take place Jan 6-10 at the Javitz Center. Detailer Mike Urbon cleans a Regal boat.

MAIN PHOTO BY BESS ADLER, ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

ARMED ROBBERS SOUGHT

4 Police are looking for a trio who entered a victim's home in the Bronx last month — armed with firearms and a machete — tied him up and robbed him of personal items. On Dec. 14 at 12:30 p.m., the three male suspects entered the 28-year-old victim's apartment on Tiebout Avenue through the front door. ANGY ALTAMIRANO

CHICAGO PAYS OUT $5.5M

5 The nearly 60 people tortured by Chicago police decades ago have begun receiving $5.5 million in reparations from the city, Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced Tuesday. The news comes as Chicago faces renewed criticism for police treatment of minority suspects. Most recently, the family of a black woman whom police admit was fatally shot by accident last month has sued the city. Last May, aldermen in the nation's third-largest city approved the payments to 57 people tortured by police in the 1970s and 1980s. REUTERS

HATE CRIME CHARGES

6 A Florida man now faces jail time after being indicted Monday on hate crime charges after allegedly attacking a Muslim store owner in Queens after saying "I kill Muslims." Piro Kolvani, 55, of Jacksonville, Florida, was arraigned in Queens County Supreme Court on charges of third-degree assault as a hate crime, third-degree assault, second-degree aggravated harassment and second-degree harassment. ANGY ALTAMIRANO

Daily Grind; Jeff Salé HANNAH MATTIX

Unlimited coffee arrives in the Financial District

Downtown caffeine addicts, Daily Grind gets you.

EVA KIS
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There's perhaps no part of the city more in need of unlimited coffee than the Financial District, and it's finally arrived with **Daily Grind**.

You would be forgiven for missing Jeff Salé's cheery black-and-orange cubbyhole of a cafe at 65 Nassau St. — there's room for maybe three people to stand inside. Kale-quinoa salads and tomato soup share counter space with square pies from This Pie Is Nuts and pastries from Bien Cuit.

But the main attraction is the coffee: For $39 a month, customers can get any size regular coffee at Daily Grind as many times a day as their caffeine habit demands, plus 20 percent off all food items. (Coffees are regularly $2.50 for 8 oz. and $3 for 12 oz.)

The subscription idea came up as a way to make Daily Grind stand out in a neighborhood that's rapidly growing, which is what drew Salé, 32, to the Financial District: "I moved to Astoria before it was cool, so I've seen places change and like that vibe."

He can usually be found behind the counter at Daily Grind, serving French-pressed coffee (the hands-on process preserves flavor) that's an equal blend of Sumatran and Colombian beans. All of the roasting is done in Brooklyn; Salé and his partner, Juan Fernandez, a competitive barista who came over from Blue Bottle, took four months alone to get the roast right.

"You get the coffee sediments to some degree, and that's what makes it a little bit fuller and a little bit bolder," he explains.

For the days when you're feeling like upgrading to a latte, Daily Grind carries a relatively new addition to the nut milk market. "Macadamia nut milk is my guilty pleasure," Salé confesses.

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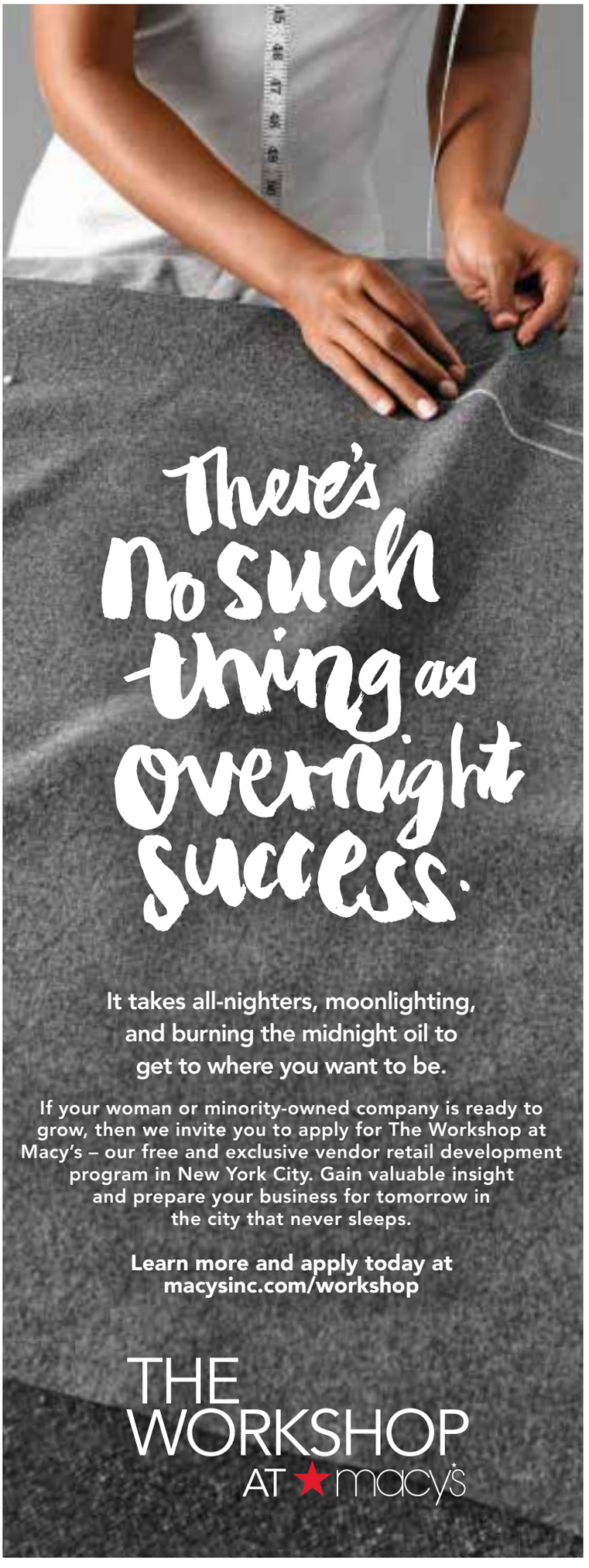
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THE WORKSHOP AT macy's

Public Advocate Letitia James, left; Ellen Davidson, staff attorney of The Legal Aid Society, center; and Ed Josephson, director of litigation at Legal Services NYC. PROVIDED

New housing bills to protect tenants, go after bad landlords

"Dangerous housing violations will not be tolerated anywhere in NYC," said Letitia James.

ANGY ALTAMIRANO
@aaltamirano28
angy.altamirano@metro.us

To start off the year, two bills aimed at improving the lives of tenants — and making sure bad landlords pay — were introduced.

Public Advocate Letitia James on Tuesday announced the "Nuisance Abatement" and "No Eviction by Construction" bills, intended to help protect residents and crack down on irresponsible landlords.

The announcement follows James' Worst Landlords Watchlist, a database released last year highlighting terrible behavior by landlords throughout the city and holding them accountable for their actions.

"Our Worst Landlords Watchlist continues to demonstrate the scale of this crisis, but our city needs stronger authority to protect vulnerable tenants and sanction bad behavior," James said. "These important tenant protection bills will send a powerful message to all landlords that dangerous housing violations will not be tolerated anywhere in New York City."

Through the Nuisance Abatement bill, the city's corporation counsel will be given the authority to bring legal action on the grounds of a housing-based nuisance, including unsanitary conditions, improper ventilation and overcrowding of occupants. The nuisances are defined to be "whatever is dangerous to human life or detrimental to health."

The No Eviction by Construction bill will call for the city's Department of Buildings (DOB) to deny building permits to owners of buildings with a certain number of unaddressed hazardous violations of housing maintenance or construction codes.

"Prohibiting landlords who fail to correct hazardous conditions from obtaining building permits is a fitting punishment."
Davidson

Permits that look to correct any Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and DOB violations will be exceptions to the bill.

"Prohibiting landlords who fail to correct hazardous conditions from obtaining building permits is a fitting punishment," said Ellen Davidson, staff attorney for nonprofit Legal Aid Society — which offers legal services to low-income New Yorkers. "Both bills would provide added protections for tenants and would ensure that New York City's resources are properly utilized to enable tenants to live in safe and decent conditions."

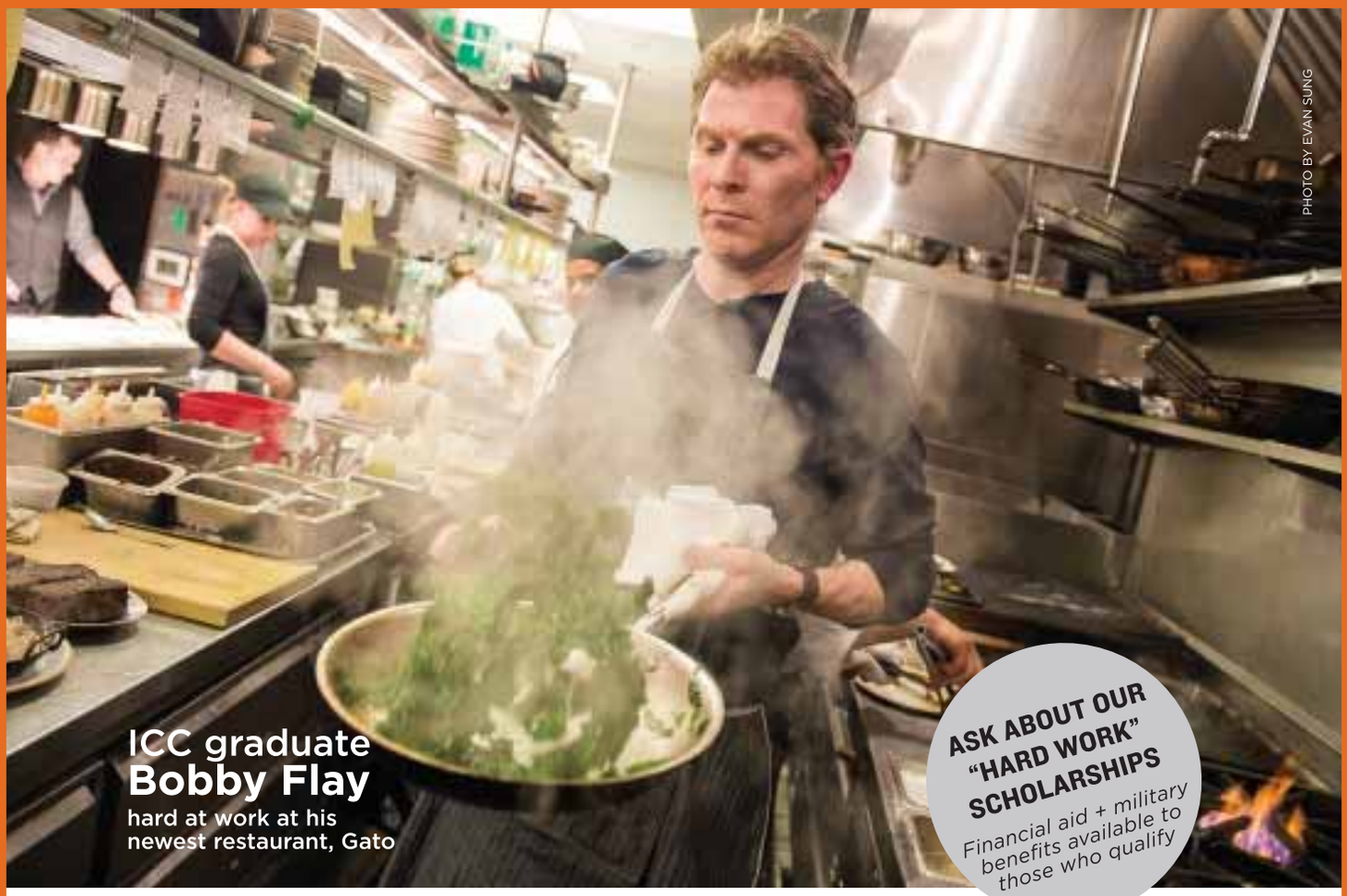
In her 2015 Worst Landlords Watchlist — assembled using data from HPD and DOB, including violations through September 2015 — the public advocate listed 100 of the worst landlords in New York City.

Making the top of the list was a Bronx landlord with 11 buildings and a total of 720 units under his care who had 2,369 violations when the list was released.

Currently, based on data from HPD, that landlord has 68 violations open — five reported after the list came out. They include not providing hot water to some apartments.

"Too many New Yorkers across the five boroughs are suffering in decrepit apartments while their landlords cheat the system and refuse to uphold the most basic housing rights. It is time to hold these negligent landlords accountable," James said.

For status of violations or building information, tenants or building owner can visit either the HPD or DOB websites.



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BRIEF

NYC dispensary is ready for Thursday's marijuana launch
At least one New York City marijuana dispensary claims to be ready for the launch of the state's medical marijuana program Thursday.

As one of the five companies licensed to grow marijuana in New York, Columbia Care announced Monday that its Union Square dispensary will open Thursday, the New York Daily News reported, adding that other dispensaries in Murray Hill, the Bronx and Queens have plans to open later this month.

"Medical marijuana has been shown to be more effective treating a myriad of illnesses in comparison to standard pharmaceuticals," Nicholas Vita, CEO of Columbia Care, said to CBS in a related article.

Marijuana will be available only in capsules, liquid cannabis and vaporizers, CBS reported, adding that medical marijuana will be used to treat 10 diseases including cancer, HIV/AIDS, Parkinson's, epilepsy and various spinal cord injuries.

In order to legally purchase medical marijuana, patients must be certified by a state-approved physician, then register with the Health Department to obtain a registry identification card, the Daily News reported. METRO

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Scott Weiland GETTY IMAGES

Scott Weiland to have Harlem tribute

Recently deceased rock 'n' roller Scott Weiland will be the subject of a Harlem tribute, featuring a cover band, videos and a painting incorporating the crowd's favorite Weiland lyrics, created on the spot.

Local artist Omo Misha is hosting the tribute at MIST Harlem Jan. 12, at 7 p.m., according to the event's Facebook page, which added that the artist had completed a portrait of Weiland in 2014 and is hosting the tribute party in lieu of a traditional art reception.

"Really, for me, he — out of all those groups that came out [at] that time — he was the only frontman I actually looked at because he made you look at him," Misha told DNAinfo.

The tribute, titled "Do We All Just Hum Along?" is taking place in Harlem because Misha could not find anywhere else in New York City that was paying tribute to the rock star, DNAinfo reported.

"It's unlikely that an event such as this would take place in Harlem, but I searched high and low to see if any of the downtown rock clubs were doing anything and found nothing," Misha was quoted by DNAinfo.

On the event's Facebook page, Misha stated that the tribute is for Weiland's fans.

"With all this talk of drugs and angry ex-wives, there has been no public celebration of Weiland, his extraordinary talent, and what the world of rock 'n' just lost," the artist wrote describing the event.

Besides a cash bar, there will be an acoustic sing-a-long at the end of the evening. JASON NUCKOLLS

BRIEF

Police seek man in wheelchair who robbed Sunnyside, Queens, bank
A suspect in a wheelchair allegedly robbed a TD Bank branch on Queens Boulevard in Sunnyside Monday after claiming to have a gun and a bomb.

The suspect, whom police described as black and between the ages of 25 and 35, arrived at the TD Bank near the corner of Queens Boulevard and 41st Street around 1:45 p.m., the New York Daily News reported.

"He was moving so fast," said a witness in a related New York Post article. "I don't know which way he went because I just thought I never seen anybody move so fast in a wheelchair."

The suspect, whom cops think is genuinely handicapped, received $500 from the teller, who also placed a dye pack with the cash, the Post added.

In his note, the man claimed to have a bomb and gun. METRO

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Sanders takes aim at Wall Street, Clinton

Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders warned on Tuesday that financial-sector greed was "destroying the fabric of our nation" and said the starting point of any Wall Street reform effort is breaking up "too big to fail" banks.

"If a bank is too big to fail, it is too big to exist; when it comes to Wall Street reform, that must be our bottom line," Sanders said in a blistering speech. He said allowing banks that are too big is essentially providing them with a "free insurance policy" to make risky investments knowing the U.S. government will prevent their collapse.

The senator from Vermont — an independent and a democratic socialist popular with the Democratic Party's populist wing — gave his speech at a theater near New York's Times Square, just "a few subway stops away from the epicenter of the global financial crisis," as his campaign put it.

Bernie Sanders GETTY IMAGES

"If a bank is too big to fail, it is too big to exist."
Sanders

Sanders also called for structural reforms to the Federal Reserve, making credit rating agencies nonprofit entities, and a tax on speculative investments. He urged increased penalties for financial fraud or malfeasance by institutions, calling fraud the business model of Wall Street.

His remarks were laced with direct and indirect criticisms of the policies and track record of primary campaign front-runner Hillary Clinton, whose constituency when she was a senator from New York included the financial industry.

Sanders favors breaking up too-big-to-fail banks and reinstating a version of the Glass-Steagall Act, a Depression-era law that prohibited commercial banks from engaging in investment banking activities.

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Mother of 'affluenza' teen accepts Texas extradition

Tonya Couch GETTY IMAGES

The mother of a Texas teenager who gained notoriety for his "affluenza" defense in a deadly drunken-driving case waived her right to fight extradition to Texas during a brief court hearing on Tuesday in California.

Wearing dark jail clothes and looking downcast, Tonya Couch, 48, was told she will be held in the custody of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and that the state of Texas has two weeks to collect her.

She spoke only in one-word replies to questions posed by Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Sergio Tapia.

Couch's fugitive son, Ethan Couch, 18, is fighting extradition to the United States from Mexico.

The pair fled to Mexico after officials in Tarrant County, Texas, began an investigation into whether the teenager violated the probation deal that kept him out of prison after he killed four people with his pickup truck in 2013.

Tonya Couch, who was wanted on a charge of hindering apprehension, was flown to Los Angeles from Mexico last week and has been held without bail at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Los Angeles.

If convicted of the hindering charge, she could face two to 10 years in prison.

Her son was sentenced to 10 years of drink- and drug-free probation, which critics saw as leniency because of his family's wealth.

During his trial, a psychologist testified on his behalf that he suffered from "affluenza," meaning he was so spoiled that he could not tell right from wrong.

The diagnosis is not recognized by the American Psychiatric Association and was widely ridiculed.

Both mother and son were arrested last week in Mexico's Pacific Coast resort of Puerto Vallarta.

A Mexican court has granted the teenager, who faces likely incarceration in Texas, a stay against deportation that could delay his return by weeks or months, according to a Mexican migration official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

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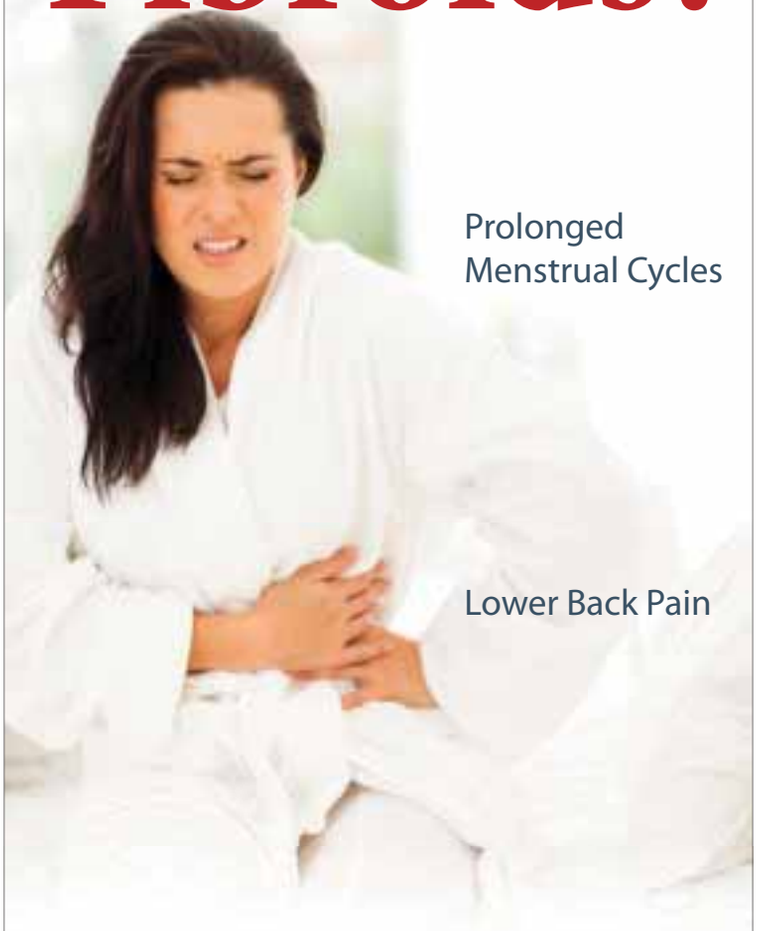

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Obama, wiping tears, makes new push to tighten gun rules

He said Americans need to be "just as passionate" as the NRA in changing gun laws, but acknowledged it won't happen during his final year in office.

President Barack Obama on Tuesday described new steps his administration will take to tighten gun rules and urged Americans to vote for candidates who do more to prevent gun violence, wiping away tears as he remembered children who died in a mass shooting.

As Obama delivered a powerful address in the White House, surrounded by family members of people killed in shootings, his voice rose to a yell as he said the constitutional rights of Americans to bear arms needed to be balanced by the right to worship, gather peacefully and live their lives.

Obama has often said his toughest time in office was grappling with the December 2012 massacre of 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut.

"That changed me, that day," Obama said, after being introduced by Mark Barden, whose 7-year-old son was killed in the shooting. "My hope earnestly has been that it would change the country."

After that tragedy, the Democratic president failed to persuade Congress to toughen U.S. gun laws. He has blamed lawmakers for being in the thrall of the powerful National Rifle Association gun lobby group.

> *"Every time I think about those kids, it gets me mad."*
>
> Obama said, tears rolling down his cheek.

Obama laid out executive action he is taking to require more gun sellers to get licenses and more gun buyers to undergo background checks.

Under the changes,

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President Obama talks about the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting and about his efforts to increase federal gun control. GETTY IMAGES

the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives will issue guidelines intended to narrow exceptions to a system that requires sellers to check with the FBI to determine whether buyers have criminal records, are charged with crimes or have mental health conditions that would bar them from owning a gun.

Any changes to gun rules in America are fraught with political risk. The Constitution's Second Amendment gives Americans the right to have arms, a right that is fiercely defended.

Legal challenges to the changes are expected and Republican presidential candidates have promised to reverse his order if they win the White House. But Obama, entering his eighth and last year in office, has said his measures are within his authority and consistent with the Constitution. REUTERS

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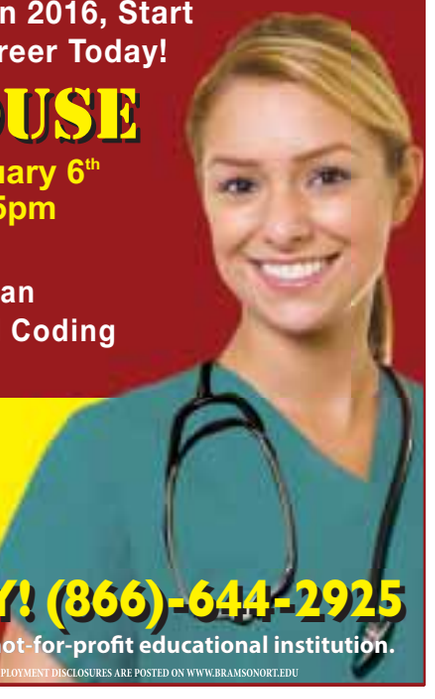

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THOUSANDS of knee arthritis sufferers flock for this advanced medical treatment - How they relieve pain while you suffer

Knee Arthritis Pain: The Untold Story

Why patients come from all over the country for this knee arthritis pain treatment and why waiting drastically decreases your chance to live a pain free life again

OsteoRelief Institute is a medical clinic with multiple locations in New York City that has treated thousands of knee arthritis patients.
Here is what every knee arthritis sufferer should know about the best treatments and options available today. And why waiting drastically decreases your chances to live a pain free life again.

The information you are about to read can possibly save you from years and years of agonizing knee pain.
It might even keep you from getting total knee replacement surgery.
Please pay careful attention. What you are about to read is a cutting-edge medical treatment... but it is NOT what it appears to be at first glance.
In fact, I'm going to have to ask for a bit of patience from you if you have already ***unsuccessfully*** tried any (or many) other knee arthritis pain treatments.
You see, many knee arthritis sufferers had already tried the treatment we are going to talk about and did not get the results they wanted. But I assure you there is something VERY DIFFERENT about the technology and the way we do this treatment that makes it much different.
And often gets results when many others have failed.
This is why patients come from all over the tri-state area

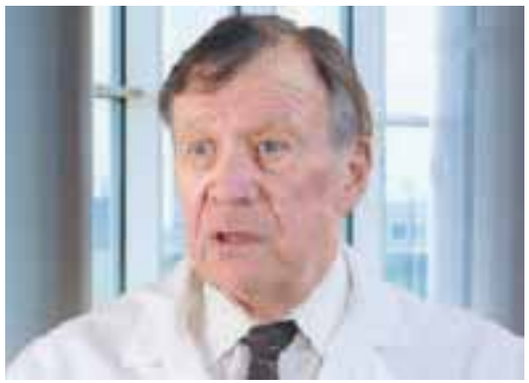
Pharmaceutical companies (with the help of scientists) can now make synovial fluid-like compounds that... during viscosupplementaiton treatments... doctors precisely inject directly into the knee joint. This helps replace the lubricating fluid to the knee joint - allowing it to move more freely and smoothly and often decreasing or even eliminating the pain.

What Results CanBe Expected?
Like all medical treatments, the results vary and can not be predicted. In fact, it is impossible to predict results and there are no statistics proving what the "average" patients can expect. Everyone is individual and gets individual results - so we never tell anyone to expect the same results as any of our other patients. **But to be 100% clear -** many knee arthritis sufferers get dramatic results. It is not uncommon for patients to either postpone knee replacement surgery for years... or even permanently cancel it.

What Are Treatments Like?
Treatments are simple, fast and virtually painless. The total time of the procedure itself is only 10 minutes and most say it is like getting a flu shot. You walk out of the clinic just minutes after your procedure.

But There Is A BIG Problem
The key is the treatment must be EXTREMELY PRECISE. If the injection is slightly off, the medication will not get into the knee joint and the treatment will

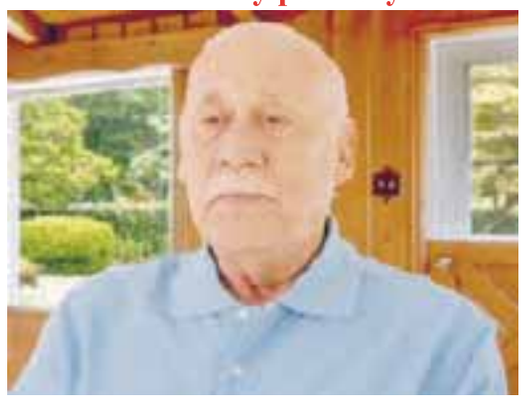
"I cannot ask for better results"



Dr. Stanley Weiner, M.D. - Surgeon

I had surgery scheduled last year. Three month before I made an appointment with OsteoRelief Institute. I was amazed at the ease with which I was evaluated and the treatment schedule implemented. **The results I had at OsteoRelief Institute were outstanding. I cannot ask for better results.** After the treatment I was able to go back to work with no discomfort at all. They use a digital monitor to locate the space that they use the treatment for and it's... it's like exact science.
Dr. Stanley Weiner

"I don't have any pain any more"



After I had the treatments the last tuneup I just

"Hey this feels terrific"

I was diagnoses bone on bone about 2 years ago I went to see an Orthopedic Surgeon and he said my knees were shot and I need to get them replaced. OsteoRelief said after looking at x-rays they could help. **That procedure is so basic so simple so quick in 15 minutes you are in and out**. I did both legs at once which is great. When I got up out of the chair I stood up and I said, ***"Hey this feels terrific."***

"I feel like a new woman - It's amazing."

and beyond to have their knee arthritis pain treated here.

Would You Like Instant Proof?

If you want instant proof - you can just look at all all the actual patient testimonials we have included. These patients were once skeptical just like you... and are now either pain free... or eliminated quite a bit of their pain.

Here's the most important thing: Many said they saw this information SEVERAL times before finally deciding to take action and give us a call. As you can see - they are happy they did. Once crippled with knee pain, they are playing golf again, dancing again, riding bikes again and going for long walks again.

But we do get one very common complaint.

And it is: "I wish I started this treatment much sooner."

Let's be very clear about this.

Time is the most precious thing. There is no way to slow it down - or get any back once it is gone. All the more reason for you to not suffer even one more second than you have to. Missing life suffering in pain is a tragedy. It's time for you to get rid of your knee pan and start living the life you want and deserve.

And please understand this: One of the keys to success in medicine is early diagnosis and treatment. Like many diseases, arthritis only gets worse over time. The longer you wait - the more damage to your knee and the more pain you will be in. If you wait too long, the entire knee joint will be degenerated and your ONLY option will be total knee replacement.

If you are suffering with knee arthritis pain, here is why you should act RIGHT NOW: When you have arthritis, you suffer a decrease in the lubricating fluids in your knee. In other words, your knee joints basically "dries up." The lubricating fluid that decreases is called "synovial fluid."

not work.

That's why the experts at OsteoReleif Institute use advanced digital imaging so they can see the injection going directly into the knee joint during the treatment.

Research shows that doctors performing joint injections without imaging miss the joint as much as 30% of the time.

If you had viscosupplementation without this special digital imaging without good results - this may be why.

That's why OsteoRelief Institute even takes it one step further. They do not just use one form of advanced imaging during treatment - they use two in their "double confirmation" process. This is to ensure patients get the best possible results.

Another Important Factor

Viscosupplementation medications also come in several different brands and chemical make-ups.

Just like all medications, some people respond better to some than others. While many doctors only use one brand, the experts at Osteorelief Institute use several and great effort is taken to figure out what the best one for YOU is.

What To Do Next If You Are In Pain: *Special Your Invitation*

OsteoRelief Institute offers a limited number of complimentary knee arthritis treatment screenings every month. These screenings are a way for knee arthritis sufferers to get some of their questions answered and see if they are a candidate for one of the cutting-edge treatments offered at OsteoRelief Institute. For a complimentary screening, just call 800-227-KNEE. The screenings fill up fast every month. This screening is no cost and there is no further obligation. Call 800-227-KNEE to schedule your screening. Many of the treatments offered at OsteoRelief Institute are covered by many insurance plans and Medicare. Call 800-227-5633 to schedule your screening.

go right to the golf course. I'm able to keep up with these guys who walk - I'm right next to them! My guys on the golf course would say Hey, look at this he doesn't need us to put the ball up any more.

When I'm playing on the course I don't have any pain any more I don't have any aches and pain. I'm out there playing!

"I feel like a new woman"

I came to the clinic because I was not sleeping at night. My leg was Pounding. There were times when I sat too long the knee would tighten up. I would get in pain and I would be miserable and I would have it for the whole night. **After the treatment I goof around with my grandchildren. I feel like a new woman.** It's great. I know I don't have to sit on the couch and be in pain and I can just pick up and get dressed and go out. It was so gentle.

It got to the point where I couldn't stand up for a period of time and I knew something had to be done about it. You walk into the doctors office - he puts your leg in a machine - he shows you where he is going to do the procedure and before you know it... it's done and you're outta there. Now I'm able to take out my bicycle a couple of the guys and myself we took a couple of rides out in the woods and we had a good time and ***I couldn't do that for years and now I'm able to do it again.***

The pain was excruciating like 24/7. Nothing I took over-the-counter would work so I knew it was something more serious.When I saw that my condition was not getting any better, I decided to do something about it and I immediately made an appointment - I went and started treatment. **The feeling of getting back to my dancing and my mobility is indescribable. I feel like a new woman - It's amazing.**

"I am ecstatic with the results of this procedure"

One day, as I was running, my knee got tighter and tighter. I had to stop and just walk home. They x-rayed me and said I was a candidate for it. You sit there for about 2-3 minutes and then you are up and walking out the door. I am ecstatic with the results of this procedure because I could not run just weeks before. I ran my race without any issues. I felt good - it just opened a door that was closing.

"I Can Finally Live My Life"

Prior the the relief center I was taking (9:30) and I was becoming addicted to it and it was damaging my health. Since the treatment, I've been able to be less dependent on them. I don't feel helpless anymore. **Since going through the procedure I can finally live. I can finally live my life.**

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US auto sales set a record in 2015

Ssales hit a record of 17.47 million vehicles in 2015, breaking the mark of 17.41 million vehicles in 2000, according to Autodata Corp.

A General Motors Chevrolet dealership GETTY IMAGES

Automakers set a new U.S. sales record for 2015 even as December sales fell short of expectations, and forecasters said the new year will be even better.

Autodata said December sales on an annualized rate, accounting for seasonal factors, were 17.34 million vehicles, well below the 18.1 million vehicles expected by a Thomson Reuters poll.

"The U.S. economy continues to expand and the most important factors that drive demand for new vehicles are in place, so we expect to see a second consecutive year of record industry sales in 2016," said Mustafa Mohatarem, chief economist for General Motors.

Mohatarem said the important factors are employment and growth in personal income, which will remain strong.

GM, the top seller in the United States, said its monthly sales rose 5.7 percent from a year ago, and Ford Motor, the No. 2 U.S. automaker, reported a jump of 8 percent.

Sales of Ford's F-Series pickup trucks rose 15 percent in December. The F-Series, led by the F-150 pickup, extended two streaks: 39 years as the best-selling truck in the United States and 34 years as the best-selling vehicle of any kind.

U.S. consumers continued in December and in 2015 to shift from cars, including sedans and hatchbacks, to SUVs, crossovers and trucks. They were encouraged by low gasoline prices and better fuel economy for the larger vehicles, said Mark LeNeve, head of Ford's U.S. sales, noting that gasoline prices topped $4 per gallon in 2008. REUTERS

BRIEF

One US service member killed, two wounded in Afghanistan

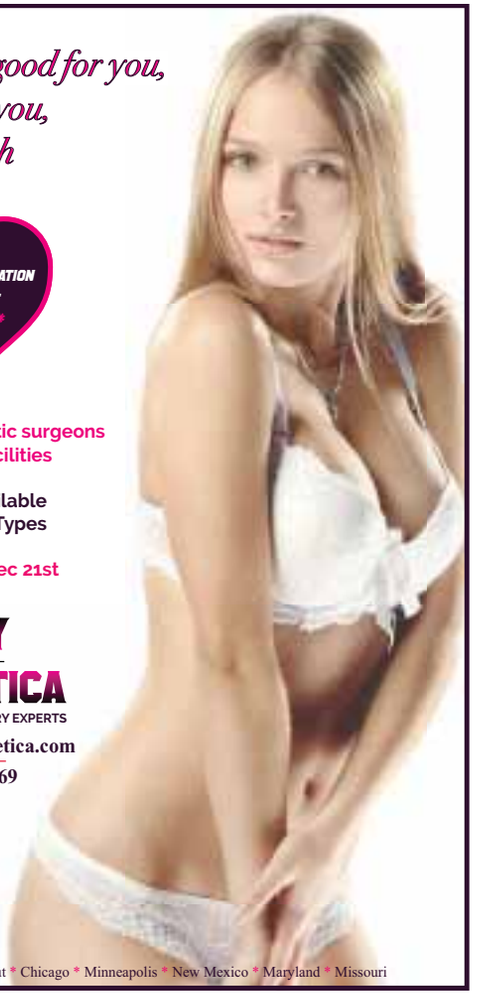
One member of the U.S. armed forces was killed and another two were wounded in the southern Afghan province of Helmand, where fierce fighting has been going on between Taliban insurgents and Afghan government forces, the U.S. military said Tuesday.

The service member died as a result of wounds sustained during operations near Marjah, Brig. Gen. Wilson Shoffner, spokesman for U.S. forces in Afghanistan, said in a statement.

"We can confirm a U.S. helicopter has landed in Marjah, Helmand Province, and is experiencing mechanical problems. It was not shot down," added U.S. Army Col. Michael Lawhorn, spokesman for the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan.

U.S. special operations troops came under heavy mortar and small-arms fire during a counterterrorism operation, NBC reported. A medical helicopter was hit by mortar fire while it was on the ground during the joint American-Afghan special operations mission, CNN reported. REUTERS

I just wanna look good for you, good for you, uh-huh



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Miley Cyrus wants Liam Hemsworth back

Everything old is new again, apparently. After two years apart filled with twerking, tongue-waggling and very little clothing, Miley Cyrus is reportedly looking to reconnect with ex-fiancé Liam Hemsworth. So much so, in fact, that she headed down to Australia to spend Christmas with the Hemsworths. "Miley came back to L.A. on Monday after spending the holidays with Liam. She had the time of her life being with him and his family," a source tells E! News. "She feels like they could pick up right where they left off. Miley has never gotten over Liam and always hoped they would get back together. She doesn't know where it will go, but she definitely still loves him and wants to be with him. Liam has an interest in being back together, too." And possibly more than just an interest, as another source says the two are already "back on." Well, that escalated quickly.

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Tyga responds to 14-year-old texting scandal

Tyga is finally speaking out about that whole "swapping text message with a 14-year-old he met on Instagram" thing that's been plaguing him since before the holidays. Of course, a press conference by the girl in question with lawyer Gloria Allred by her side — because of course it's Gloria Allred — is bound to elicit some sort of response. "The truth is that Tyga contacted me first. He direct-messaged me on Instagram. I knew who he was, but I was surprised that he was contacting me," Molly O'Malia said Monday. "I began to feel uncomfortable when he asked me to FaceTime with him. Because of my discomfort with why he wanted to communicate with me, I quickly stopped responding to him."

But that's the tricky thing — why Tyga wanted to communicate with her. The rapper spoke out to TMZ via his reps insisting he was only ever interested in her as a singer. In addition, Tyga's manager says the girl said she was actually 17 in text messages — screenshots of which were provided to the website. So there.

@tyrabanks
I just tweeted I'm going to show you how to turn your hobby into a jobby and just heard jobby in Scotland means....

@michaelianblack
My new book is finally out, and I'm thrilled to report it seems poised to utterly disappear.

@thandienewton
Real journalists have become freedom fighters.

Should we be worried about Johnny Depp?

Guys? Johnny Depp isn't looking too good. The "Black Mass" star hit the Palm Springs International Film Festival red carpet looking puffy, palid and worse for the wear, with his problematic complexion only amplified by the presence of wife Amber Heard by his side, looking stunning as usual. "He was very friendly but almost unrecognizable. He looked to have put on a good 30 pounds at least," a source on the scene tells Radar Online. "His hair was a greasy mess, and his teeth were yellowed, too. It was pretty shocking. He looked more like Marlon Brando than Johnny Depp." I'm going to go ahead and assume that source means late-in-life Brando, because being compared to young Brando is a total compliment.

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Finding the last 'American Idol'

Another "American Idol" hopeful gets a ticket to Hollywood.

Keith Urban, Jennifer Lopez and Harry Connick Jr. return as judges for the final "American Idol," premiering tonight and tomorrow at 8 p.m. on Fox.

ALL PHOTOS MICHAEL BECKER/FOX

The singing show that started it all looks for a "bookend" to Kelly Clarkson.

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"American Idol," the reality show that 14 years ago kicked off a tidal wave of singing competitions that have dominated network television — and introduced America to Simon Cowell — is having its last hurrah.

After failing to match up in the ratings to its younger competitors and facing flagging interest from viewers, Fox announced last year that it was shuttering its signature reality show, but not before one more search for a star. It's 15th and final season, cleverly spun into something of a victory lap rather than delayed cancellation, has a two-night, four-hour premiere airing tonight and tomorrow.

But what are we hoping to get out of one more season of "Idol"? And how is the show positioning itself in the crowded reality television landscape it helped create? What can the winner — or even the viewers — really expect at this point, when we live in a world where the victors of even the most popular singing competition on TV — "The Voice" — struggle for any actual success? Often, it's been better to almost make it on "Idol." Just ask runners-up Clay Aiken, Adam Lambert or Jennifer Hudson (who didn't even reach the finals).

There's good reason host Ryan Seacrest cannily refers to the final season's champion as "the bookend to Kelly Clarkson," the very first "American Idol" winner. Clarkson has gone on to enjoy the kind of career the show's producers hoped every winner would, but she's the exception, not the rule. During the premiere, an adorably awkward hopeful and "Idol" super-fan, Michelle Marie, is tasked with naming all 14 previous winners in order, and even she has trouble. You won't be faulted if some of the names and faces don't ring a bell right away.

Going Country

So how is "American Idol" setting itself apart? If the first few rounds of auditions are any indication, it's by setting its sights on the heartland, with an emphasis on country and twang that would make Blake Shelton blush. It's no accident that the new season kicks off with auditions in cities like Atlanta, Denver and Little Rock, Arkansas, and that so many hopefuls walk in carrying guitars. Whether or not the folksy focus will translate into improved ratings for the last hurrah, though, is still up in the air.

Ranking the Idols

Here's our take on where the show's winners stand on a scale from superstar to head-scratcher:

1. Kelly Clarkson
2. Carrie Underwood
3. Fantasia Barrino
4. Jordin Sparks
5. Ruben Studdard
6. Phillip Phillips
7. Taylor Hicks
8. Scotty McCreery
9. Nick Fradiani
10. Kris Allen
11. Lee DeWyze
12. David Cook
13. Candice Glover
14. Caleb Johnson

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'NOTTING HILL'

Julia Roberts and Hugh Grant get close in the Richard Curtis-written "Notting Hill." PROVIDED

We're emphatic about our hatred of Richard Curtis' "Love Actually." But we're only slightly ashamed of our love for other movies written by Richard Curtis. The Englishman became a cottage industry unto himself with rom-coms like "Four Weddings and a Funeral" as well as this one, with Hugh Grant at his stammeringest as a modest Londonite who suddenly finds himself getting it on with a Julia Roberts-like star (played by Julia Roberts). We can't really defend its combination of the cornball and the awkward, but we like it anyway, and as journalists, we especially dig the scene where Grant has to pretend to be one of us at a swanky and soul-deadening movie press junket, posing as a Horse and Hound journo and firing off inane queries like, "Are there any horses in it?"

'THE MEND'

Josh Lucas experiments with e-cigarettes in "The Mend." CINELICIOUS

One of last year's very best movies follows odd couple brothers — Josh Lucas' no-goodnik and Stephen Plunkett's uptight lawyer — as they spend some not-so-quality time together. But that hardly conveys the riches in John Magary's indie, one of the most thrilling debuts in ages. The opposite of a shaggy mumblecore, it's as tightly wound as its two heroes, who struggle to contain their anxieties and anger as they descend into self-destruction and decadence together. Great soundtrack, too, filled with everything from all-girl Swedish post-punk and Christian psych rock to bass-heavy Brazilian jazz.

'THE SHINING'

Jack Nicholson goes nuts in "The Shining." WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Did you know Stanley Kubrick was once nominated for a Razzie? The people of 1980 hated his loose stab at Stephen King's shocker so much that one of movies' most respected auteurs was almost bestowed with award season's lowest accolade. But every Kubrick is eventually reclaimed, and nowadays "The Shining" is considered one of his finest works. In fact, "The Shining" is so loved now that it's spawned an underground of obsessees, as seen in the doc "Room 237," who hatch bizarre and genuinely insane theories, like that it's Kubrick's veiled admission of helping fake the Apollo 11 moon landing.

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3 Books to jump-start your New Year's resolutions

Get inspired for a total life makeover with these inspiring new releases.

EMILY LAURENCE
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How about a little inspiration with your coffee? ISTOCK

Bye bye, 2015, and hello, new year and new chapter. But meeting your resolution goals isn't going to happen unless you have a plan. Make the first book you read in 2016 one that will transform your life.

'Vital Signs' by Gregg Levoy

Let's be real: Going to work isn't something that makes the average person happy to shut off their alarm clock. A 2015 Gallup poll found that 70 percent of employees are either "not engaged" or "actively disengaged" at work. "Vital Signs" will help you rediscover your passion with tips for forming deeper relationships and new ways to live out the things you are truly interested in. If you feel depressed, stuck or bored, this book will help you get out of that rut and usher in a revival.

'Choosing Love' by Sherianna Boyle, MEd

If there is a relationship in your life causing you stress or fear — whether it's with a partner, parent, sibling or friend — let "Choosing Love" be your guidebook on how to love the right way. Psychologist Sherianna Boyle offers tips on connecting in healthy ways to transform the relationships in your life in a way that will have you overflowing with happiness and joy. Alternatively, if you have been scared of getting too close to people, she teaches you how to eradicate that fear and go all in.

'Wired to Create' by Scott Barry Kaufman & Carolyn Gregoire

Kaufman and Gregoire's Huffington Post article "18 Things Highly Creative People Do Differently" got over 5 million views in one week, and now the duo have a book with even more tips. Make 2016 the year you turn your dream into a reality with their tips on ways to promote more creative thinking and examples of successful people who have put the tips to good use.

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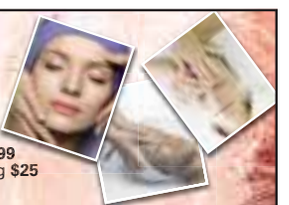

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Home work: 2016 resolutions

It's the season for improvements. Here are three ways to start the new year off right.

MONICA WEYMOUTH
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Every year, we declare our intention on Jan. 1: We're going to be, in a word, better. Whether that means a little change or a major overhaul, this is the designated time to do some life maintenance and make a few overdue upgrades. How does that look when applied to your home? Not all that much different.

It's all about creating good habits like keeping the kitchen clean.

1 Look great for less

An extreme makeover is tempting for the new year, yes — but it's also expensive. Before you whip out that holiday-heavy credit card and redo your living room, consider some cheaper alternatives, suggests Denise Sabia, the designer and blogger behind ThePaintedHome.com. "My home resolution is to update and freshen up my old sofa with new pillows and throws," she says.

Want to give your room a fresh look fast? Try cheery pillows.

2 Discover a new passion

A good resolution results in an improvement. A great resolution brings about a new habit. So while a shiny new kitchen is a worthy goal, it's messing up that kitchen that will really transform your home. "Rather than trying to make a resolution, I focus on perfecting one thing each year," says Gwen Hefner of TheMakerista.com. "Last year it was hospitality, and this year it's food."

3 Focus on what's important

Just like you have only so much time in a day, your basement has only so many square feet. Free yourself up and get rid of what's not important before another year piles on. "My most attainable and tangible goal is to purge and organize my home," says designer and lifestyle blogger Marian Parsons of Missmustardseed.com. "I am yearning to simplify and get rid of the things we don't use, need or love, and organize the things we decide to keep."

Get rid of the things you don't need or love to have a clutter-free home in 2016.

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Keys to the Giants' offseason

The G-Men have plenty of work to do if they want to once again become a Super Bowl contender.

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The Giants' season unofficially ended in Week 16 when the Redskins clinched the NFC East. But Sunday's season-finale loss to the Eagles really shut the door on yet another playoff-less campaign. Such a disappointing season will undoubtedly bring about changes to a franchise that hasn't been relevant since its 2011 Super Bowl-winning campaign — and that began with head coach Tom Coughlin stepping down on Monday afternoon. And while all but a handful of NFL franchises would trade four-straight losing seasons for two championship rings in an eight-year span — for this franchise, it's not acceptable.

The search begins

The Giants have requested permission from the Bears to interview offensive coordinator Adam Gase, according to reports. Gase, who was the offensive coordinator in Denver prior to this past season with Chicago, is in high demand as he is expected to interview with the Browns, Eagles and Dolphins.

Of note, Giants owner John Mara said that he wouldn't rule out trading a draft pick in order to land "the right coach." All signs point to Sean Payton wanting out of New Orleans and Payton is said to be "monitoring" the situation with the G-Men.

Remember this guy? The Victor Cruz situation will be one to monitor going forward. GETTY IMAGES

1 Linebackers

Aside from the very talented Devon Kennard, the Giants haven't drafted an elite talent at that position in years — and Kennard actually lined up at defensive end for half his time at USC. Instead, over the years, general manager Jerry Reese has tried to patch up that unit with veteran free agents who were productive, but were either always injured or not elite impact players (Jon Beason, Keith Rivers, and Michael Boley), or mid- to-late-round picks that proved to be just ordinary guys (Mark Herzlich, Adrian Tracy, Greg Jones and Clint Sintim). It could be argued that the last snarling, fearsome, athletic linebacker who had an impact and was drafted by the Giants was Jessie Armstead — and he was an eighth-round flier in the 1993 draft.

2 Defensive end

There's a theme here. Coughlin bemoaned that his Giants failed to "finish" games all season, and a big reason was due to the lack of a pass rush to keep teams from erasing late-game deficits. If the Giants could've gotten to Tony Romo, Matt Ryan, Tom Brady or Cam Newton at least once on those game-winning drives, Big Blue would likely be preparing for the playoffs instead of emptying their lockers. Jason Pierre-Paul's future is up in the air, as he's now a free agent and there's been no word from either side that he'll re-sign. Pierre-Paul, who noted he'll undergo one more surgery on his mangled right hand, acknowledged that he'd like to return ("I want to be here next year [and] finish my career here"), but cryptically added that "it's a business … a lot of teams would like to have [defensive ends] like me who can rush the passer." The Giants could technically use the franchise tag on him again this offseason, but at an estimated $15 million, that's unlikely. Whether Pierre-Paul returns or not, there's still plenty to be desired about the pass-rush situation. The Giants are going to have to do their homework on the impending free-agent class and be vigilant in finding a pass rusher in the early rounds of the draft. They currently own the 10th pick, so that's a primo spot to nab someone like Clemson All-American end Shaq Lawson.

3 Protection for their franchise quarterback

Eli Manning won't ever say it publicly, but something needs to be done with the offensive line. While he's posted career numbers in back-to-back seasons under OC Ben McAdoo, Manning still has been under siege more times than he's cared, and that's due to an offensive line that's broken down — and lacks quality depth. The left side of the line seems to be in good hands, featuring Ereck Flowers at tackle, Justin Pugh at guard, and Weston Richburg at center. But it's the right side that's been cumbersome. Flowers was originally drafted to be the right tackle, but Will Beatty's season-ending pectoral injury forced the switch to the left side. The season ended with guys named John Jerry and Marshall Newhouse manning the right side.

4 A new sidekick for Odell Beckham Jr.

As great as Beckham has been during his first two seasons — and record-breaking campaigns they've been — he's been a one-man wrecking crew on the perimeter. Eventually, he'll need help. And whether that's with the return of Victor Cruz — if he's brought back — or via free agency and the draft, remains to be seen. Giants fans have waited the last two seasons to see the duo take the league by storm. Alas, it's yet to happen, and may never happen, especially if the Giants seek a pay cut (he's due $7.9 million next season, second highest behind Manning — a hefty price tag for a guy who hasn't been on the field since October of 2014). Rueben Randle will likely test the free-agent waters, which means Big Blue will need to replenish, and upgrade this corps.

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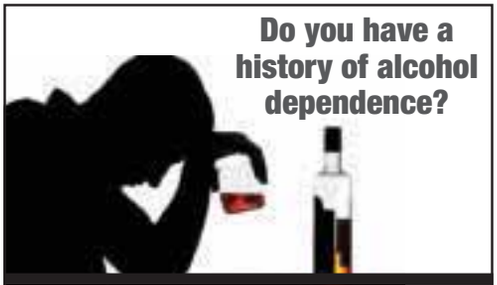

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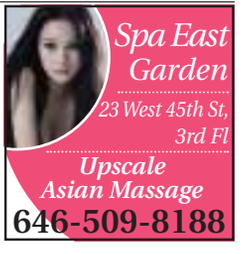

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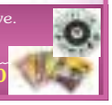

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Hexagon Word

Clues:

1. Peckish
2. Puzzle
3. Held gently
4. Brutal
5. Wrap around
6. The O of H20

Use the clues to fill in the spaces in the numbered hexagons. Each answer runs clockwise but can start anywhere in the shape. Where hexagons touch, they have the same letter. We've given you the first answer. The letters in the middle hexagon reveal a mystery keyword.

Mix 'n' Match

CHA	OST	TED
DEC	COC	ERS
DEV	TER	ING
ENS	EPT	NDS
IMP	IOU	NED
MAS	NAR	ORS
THO	IST	SLY
CON	USA	ION
MIN	STE	FUL

Clues:

1. Charlatans
2. Invented
3. Authoritative
4. Misleadingly
5. Entangling
6. Reverend
7. Hundreds, ..., millions
8. Subdued

Take a set of letters from each column and combine them to form a nine-letter answer to each clue. Once finished, the remaining sets of letters will spell out another nine-letter word. This is your answer

metro.us/crossword

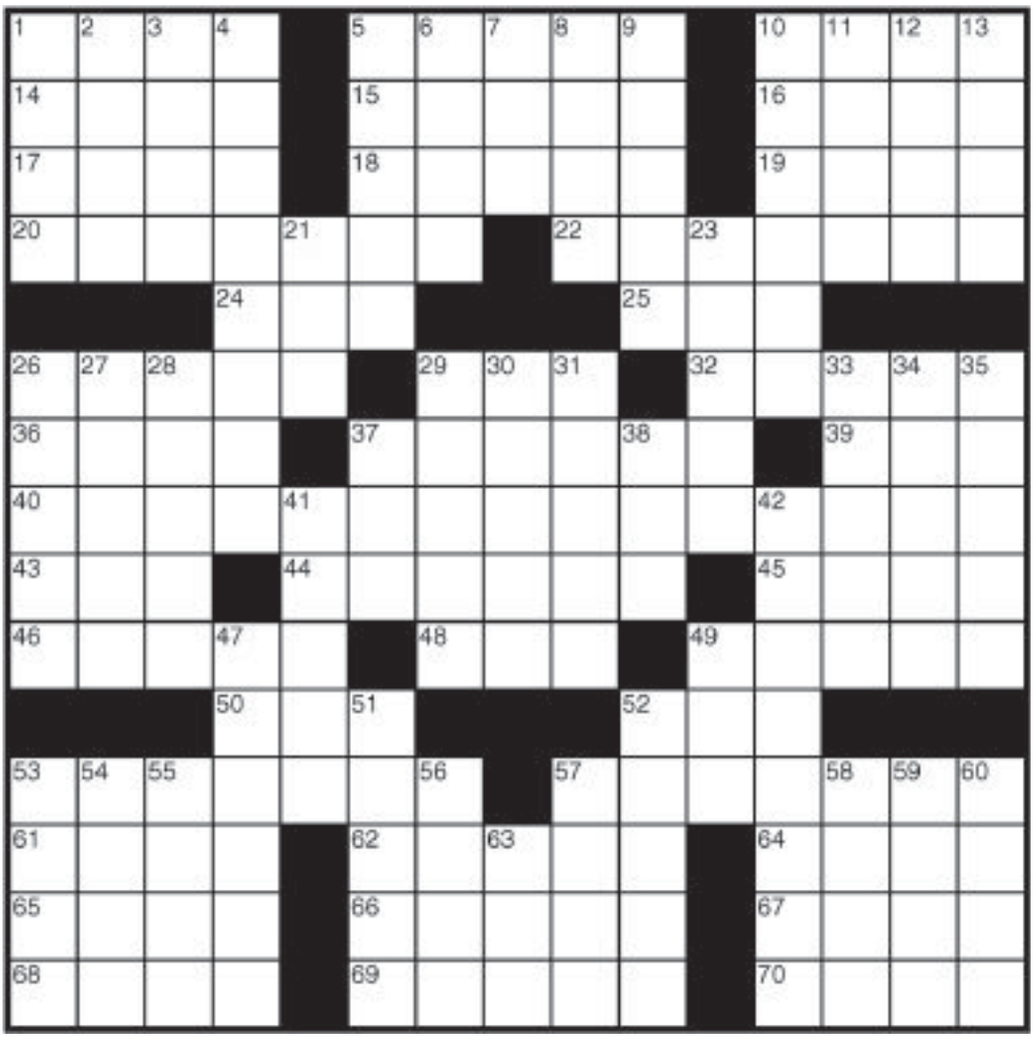
Across

1 Train for boxing
5 Halloween teeth
10 Benefit, often
14 Hearty companion
15 Kapitan's command (hyph.)
16 NYSE rival
17 — spumante
18 Columbus' port
19 District
20 Visible at night
22 Broad-minded
24 Brewery tank
25 Cause a blister
26 Basilica areas
29 Pub. prosecutors
32 Kim of "Vertigo"
36 Meadow murmurs
37 Walloped
39 Tavern
40 Crawl alternative (2 wds.)
43 Yale grad
44 Bayou dweller
45 Mexican pot
46 Hitachi rival
48 Type of whiskey
49 Cleared the dishes
50 Henri's island
52 — out (relax)
53 Tot's attire
57 Lucille Ball, e.g.
61 Cause to fall
62 Got back, as a championship
64 Pantyhose hue
65 Pave the way
66 On both feet
67 Lean-to
68 Gin-fizz flavor
69 Cubicle fillers
70 Prepare the salad

Down

1 Fraud
2 El —, Texas
3 Low voice
4 Change a portfolio
5 Tempus — (time flies)
6 Help a crook
7 Persona — grata
8 Liverpool poky
9 Series of steps
10 Elegant garden feature
11 Romance, to Pedro
12 Actress — Dunham
13 Eddie's cop character
21 Refrain syllables
23 Cake-pan type
26 Paris priests
27 Abdul or Prentiss
28 Tuxedo trim
29 Hold off on
30 Brass or bronze
31 Arrange hair
33 Strads
34 It may turn on you
35 Work, as clay
37 Icy remark?
38 WNW opposite
41 Quebec school
42 Bumpiest
47 Hurrah!
49 Futon or bunk
51 Blew it
52 Cracks in volcanos
53 66 and I-80
54 — hygiene
55 Japanese soup
56 Bone-dry
57 Jagger's genre
58 Nymph who pined away
59 Warmonger of myth
60 Clothing
63 Mr. Craven

FOR THE ANSWERS TO TODAY'S PUZZLES, **metro.us/games**



games

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries Look over your personal papers or take action if you have a medical concern. Negotiate a deal or contract if you want to make headway.

Taurus Keeping busy will help you avoid an argument. Get involved in something that will bring you greater knowledge or update your skills.

Gemini You'll be drawn to someone who isn't a good influence. Look for red flags before you make any binding promises.

Cancer Maintain a calm demeanor and back away from unpredictable situations. Put greater emphasis on your home and family.

Leo An opportunity will unfold if you attend an industry event. Love is in the stars, and including someone special in your plans is encouraged.

Virgo Participate in an activity or event that forces you to be energetic and pay attention. Don't let emotional matters overwhelm you.

Libra Plan a trip or make arrangements to do something with a loved one, close friend or the youngsters in your life.

Scorpio Don't trust someone promising the impossible. You are best off taking a pass and avoiding regret. Stick to your own devices.

Sagittarius You'll have trouble controlling the situations unfolding around you. Stand still until the dust settles and you can assess the damage.

Capricorn Don't make any cash donations. Someone is likely to play on your emotions and give you false information.

Aquarius Check out a business opportunity or take part in an event that will help boost your reputation and set you up for future advancement.

Pisces Don't do or say something you'll regret. Stick to a plan and use your energy wisely. Be productive instead of wasting time. EUGENIA LAST

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easy

					1	9		8
7	1	9				2		
				7		6		
3	5				9	8		
1	4			3			2	9
		6	5				4	1
		7		2				
		1				7	9	5
5		3	7					

hard

		6	3	9				
					4	3	1	
			6				5	9
	5				3	4		
	4	1	2		8	5	9	
		2	4				3	
6	7				1			
	2	8	7					
				8	2	6		

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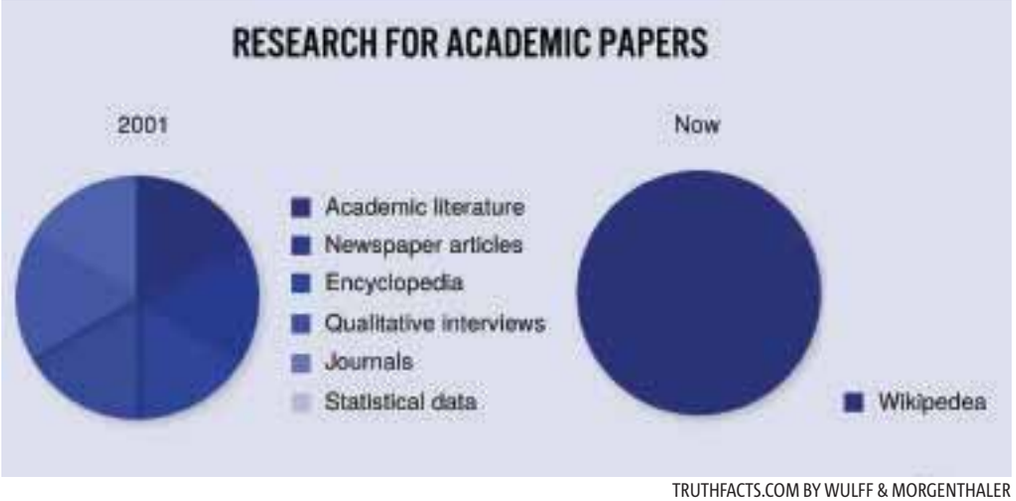

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